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EDITORIAL

I recently had the opportunity to visit the important site of the Camel Carvings, which was discovered a few years ago in Sakaka, in Al-Jouf region, in the northern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I saw the three-dimensional rock carvings (in Relief sculptural method) of camels in full size. This discovery represents a precedent due to the unique technique used, in spite of the fact that rock carving is one of the most used technique in rock art in Saudi Arabia in particular, and the Arab World in general. Societies of that period were masterful in artistic skills, evidenced by their advanced sculptures which are indicative of skills and techniques acquired by practice and experience. These artistic efforts represent evidence to the ancient civilizations that once inhabited the Arabian Peninsula.

The camel site includes about twenty relief sculptures, seventeen of which are sculptures of camels, and three of the equid family. The scientific team, which includes Saudi archaeologists and others from several European countries, America and Australia, believes that these full-size three-dimensional sculptures are probably the oldest in the world. The skills of ancient sculpture are demonstrated through the quality of carving at the site and use of simple materials from the local environment to accomplish this creative work of art. Although most of these sculptures fell and separated off the large rocks; their original location, as a result of natural factors, large parts remain intact in their place, which contributed greatly to introducing us to this spectacular artistic legacy.

The Heritage Commission, the Saudi Ministry of Culture, has paid great attention to this site, and has taken the necessary measures to fence and protect it. A special symposium was held to present the results of scientific studies conducted on the site with the participation of several scientists and



researchers specialized in similar studies around the world.

These camel rock carvings reveal remarkable aspects of the beautiful rock art, perfected by human groups about seven thousand years ago. These sculptures add to the archaeological treasures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, about civilizations that prevailed over successive ages in the Arabian Peninsula. The official authorities in the Kingdom, whether working in the field of antiquities, heritage and culture, or with the Al-Jouf Region Governorate, will undoubtedly provide everything that would help preserve this cultural heritage, as they do to other archaeological and heritage sites in the Kingdom.

This year, Jordan announced the discovery of a unique archaeological stone structure, in Al-Khashabiya Mountains, Al-Jafr region of Ma'an, the Jordanian Badia. This stone structure is a desert kite dating back to the Neolithic period, about seven thousand years ago, when ancient communities used desert kites to hunt wild animals. This discovery was the result of archaeological excavations carried out by an archaeological research team from Jordan and France. The site includes a large number of different artifacts, marine fossils, animal figurines, flint tools, and hearths. It also includes two standing stones with a human face carved on each one of them. Preliminary indications show that the site may be associated with the practice of religious rituals. Furthermore, the team discovered evidence for human habitation, with artefacts confirming the practice of collective hunting.



The discovered desert kites were built of stone walls extending over a distance of several kilometers, designed in the form of an angle; wide from the east side, and gradually

narrowing towards the west. This would allow animals to enter between the two walls of the kite and get trapped in its narrow end. This way, the animals would not be able to escape; making them easy to hunt.

The structures discovered near these desert kites consist of semi-circular rooms, indicative of residential units, where archaeological remains and various artifacts were found. These discoveries signify the distinct flint industry of the ancient societies that inhabited the area. In addition, large quantities of gazelle bones were also found in those camps.

The research team also indicated that these structures included many adjoining circular rooms, with a "ritual" structure in the middle, giving it a peculiar shape and making it distinct from the rest of the rooms. This facility consists of several parts, most importantly two erect stones with a human face and head, and about 250 artifacts, mainly marine fossils.

The discovery team associated these kites with the "Ghassanid Culture", named after Ghassan Mount in the explored area. It seems that the ancient residents of these facilities formed a hunter-gatherer society using desert kites, and hunting was part of their cultural and socioeconomic life.

We hope the excavations and research studies in this area will reveal more information about the social, economic and cultural life of the hunters who once lived there.

Editor -in-Chief